

X

THE
TRAGEDY
OF
JANE SHORE.

WRITTEN BY
NICOLAS ROWE, Esq;

——— *Conjux ubi pristinus illi*
Respondet Curis.

VIRG.

GLASGOW:

Printed by WILLIAM DUNCAN Junior,

Vol. A4. f 20 M, DCC, LV.

M. add. 108 c 187 (2)



P R O L O G U E.

Spoken by Mr. WILKS.

TO-night, if you have brought your good old tale,
 We'll treat you with a downright English feast.
 A tale, which told long since in homely wise,
 Hath never fail'd of melting gentle eyes;
 Let no nice Sir despise our hapless dame,
 Because recording ballads chaunt her name;
 Those venerable antient song-enditers
 Soar'd many a pitch above our modern writers:
 They caterwaul'd in no romantic ditty,
 Sighing for Phillis's, or Chloe's pity.
 Justly they drew the fair, and spoke her plain,
 And sung her by her Christ'an name — 'twas Jane.
 Our numbers may be more refin'd than those,
 But what we've gain'd in verse, we've lost in prose.
 Their words, no shuffling, double-meaning knew,
 Their speech was homely, but their hearts were true.
 In such an age immortal Shakespear wrote,
 By no quaint rules, nor hampering criticks taught;
 With rough majestic force he mov'd the heart,
 And strength and nature made amends for art.
 Our humble author does his steps pursue,
 He owns he had the mighty bard in view;
 And in these scenes has made it more his care
 To rouse the passions, than to charm the ear.
 Yet for those gentle beaux who love the chime,
 The ends of acts still gingle into rhyme.
 The ladies too, he hopes, will not complain,
 Here are some subjects for a soster strain,
 A nymph forsaken, and a perjur'd swain.
 What most he fears, is, lest the dames should frown,
 The dames of wit and pleasure about town,
 To see our picture drawn, unlike their own.



P R O L O G U E.

*But lest that error should provoke to fury
The hospitable hundreds of Old Drury,
He bid me say, in our Jane Shore's defence,
She dol'd about the charitable pence,
Built hospitals, turn'd saint, and dy'd long since.
For her example, whatsoe'er we make it,
They have their choice to let alone, or take it.
Tho' few, as I conceive, will think it meet,
To weep so sorely for a sin so sweet :
Or mourn and mortify the pleasant sense,
To rise in tragedy two ages hence.*

Dramatis Personae.

M E N.

Duke of Gloster.	<i>Mr. Cibber.</i>
Lord Hastings.	<i>Mr. Booth.</i>
Catesby.	<i>Mr. Husbands.</i>
Sir Richard Ratcliffe.	<i>Mr. Bowman.</i>
Bellmour.	<i>Mr. Mills.</i>
Dumont.	<i>Mr. Wilks.</i>

W O M E N.

Alicia.	<i>Mrs. Porter.</i>
Jane Shore.	<i>Mrs. Oldfield.</i>

Several Lords of the council, guards, and attendants.

A C T I. S C E N E I.

S C E N E, *the Tower.*

Enter the Duke of Gloster, Sir Richard Ratcliffe, and Catesby.

Glost. **T**HUS far success attends upon our councils,
And each event has answer'd to my wish;
The queen and all her upstart race are quell'd;
Dorset is banish'd, and her brother Rivers
E'er this lies shorter by the head at Pomfret.
The nobles have with joint concurrence nam'd me
Protector of the realm: my brother's children,
Young Edward and the little York are lodg'd
Here, safe within the Tower. How say, you, sirs,
Does not this business wear a lucky face?
The scepter and the golden wreath of royalty
Seem hung within my reach.

Ratcl. Then take 'em to you,
And wear 'em long and worthily; you are
The last remaining male of princely York:
(For Edward's boys, the state esteems not of 'em,)
And therefore on your sovereignty and rule,
The common weal does her dependance make,
And leans upon your highness' able hand.

Cat. And yet to-morrow does the council meet
To fix a day for Edward's coronation.
Who can expound this riddle?

Glost. That can I.

Those lords are each one my approv'd good friends,
Of special trust and nearness to my bosom;
And howsoever busy they may seem,
And diligent to bustle in the state,
Their zeal goes on no further than we lead,
And at our bidding stays.

Cat. Yet there is one,
And he amongst the foremost in his power,
Of whom I wish your highness were assur'd:
For me, perhaps it is my nature's fault,
I own I doubt of his inclining much.

Gloſt. I guess the man at whom your words wou'd point:
Hastings ———

Cat. The same.

Gloſt. He bears me great good will.

Cat. 'Tis true, to you, as to the lord protector,
And Gloster's Duke, he bows with lowly service:
But were he bid to cry, God save king Richard,
Then tell me in what terms he would reply.
Believe me, I have prov'd the man, and found him;
I know he bears a most religious reverence
To his dead master Edward's royal memory,
And whither that may lead him, is most plain.
Yet more ——— One of the stubborn sort he is,
Who, if they once grow fond of an opinion,
They call it honour, honesty, and faith,
And sooner part with life than let it go.

Gloſt. And yet this tough impracticable heart
Is govern'd by a dainty finger'd girl;
Such flaws are found in the most worthy natures;
A laughing, toying, wheedling, whimpering she,
Shall make him amble on a gossip's message,
And take the distaff with a hand as patient
As e'er did Hercules.

Ratcl. The fair Alicia,
Of noble birth and exquisite of feature,
Has held him long a vassal to her beauty.

Cat. I fear, he fails in his allegiance there;
Or my intelligence is false, or else
The dame has been too lavish of her feast,
And fed him till he loaths.

Gloſt. No more, he comes.

Enter Lord Hastings.

L. Haſt. Health and happiness of many days

Attend upon your grace.

Gloft. My good Lord-chamberlain!

We're much beholden to your gentle friendship.

L. Haft. My Lord, I come an humble fuitor to you.

Gloft. In right good time. Speak out your pleasure freely.

L. Haft. I am to move your highness in behalf
Of Shore's unhappy wife.

Gloft. Say you, of Shore?

L. Haft. Once a bright star that held her place on high,
The first and fairest of our English dames,
While royal Edward held the sov'reign rule,
Now sunk in grief, and pining with despair;
Her weaning form no longer shall incite
Envy in women, or desire in man.
She never sees the sun, but thro' her tears,
And wakes to sigh the live-long night away.

Gloft. Marry! the times are badly chang'd with her
From Edward's days to these. Then all was jollity,
Feasting and mirth, light wantonness and laughter,
Piping and playing, minstrelsy and masquing;
Till life fled from us like an idle dream,
A shew of mommery without a meaning.
My brother, rest and pardon to his soul,
Is gone to his account, for this his minion.
The revel-rout is done ——— But you were speaking
Concerning her ——— I have been told that you
Are frequent in your visitation to her.

L. Haft. No farther, my good Lord, than friendly pity
And tender hearted charity allow.

Gloft. Go to: I did not mean to chide you for it:
For, sooth to say, I hold it noble in you
To cherish the distressed — On with your tale.

L. Haft. Thus it is, gracious Sir, that certain officers
Using the warrant of your mighty name,
With insolence unjust, and lawless power,
Have seiz'd upon the lands, which late she held
By grant from her great master Edward's bounty.

Gloſt. Somewhat of this, but ſlightly, have I heard,
 And tho' ſome counsellors of forward zeal,
 Some of moſt ceremonious ſanctity,
 And bearded wiſdom, often have provok'd
 The hand of juſtice to fall heavy on her;
 Yet ſtill in kind compaſſion of her weakneſs,
 And tender memory of Edward's love,
 I have with-held the mercileſs ſtern law
 From doing outrage on her helpleſs beauty.

L. Haſt. Good Heav'n, who renders mercy back for
 With open handed bounty ſhall repay you: [mercy,
 This gentle deed ſhall fairly be ſet foremoſt,
 To ſcreen the wild eſcapes of lawleſs paſſion,
 And the long train of frailties fleſh is heir to.

Gloſt. Thus far, the voice of pity pleaded only;
 Our farther and more full extent of grace
 Is given to your requeſt. Let her attend,
 And to ourſelf deliver up her griefs.
 She ſhall be heard with patience, and each wrong
 At full redreſt. But I have other news
 Which much import us both, for ſtill my fortunes
 Go hand in hand with yours: our common foes,
 The queen's relations, our new-fangled gentry,
 Have fall'n their haughty creſts — that for your privacy.
 [Exeunt.

SCENE II.

An apartment in Jane Shore's houſe.

Enter Bellmour and Dumont.

Bell. How ſhe has liv'd you've heard my tale already.
 The reſt your own attendance in her family,
 Where I have found the means this day to place you,
 And nearer obſervation beſt will tell you.
 See with what ſad and ſober cheer ſhe comes!

Enter Jane Shore.

Sure, or I read her viſage much amiſs,

Or grief besets her hard. Save you, fair lady,
The blessings of the chearful morn be on you,
And greet your beauty with its opening sweets.

J. Sh. My gentle neighbour! your good wishes still
Pursue my hapless fortunes: ah! good Bellmour!
How few, like thee, enquire the wretched out,
And court the offices of soft humanity?
Like thee reserve their raiment for the naked,
Reach out their bread, to feed the crying orphan,
Or mix their pitying tears with those that weep?
Thy praise deserves a better tongue than mine
To speak and bless thy name. Is this the gentleman,
Whose friendly service you commended to me?

Bell. Madam! it is.

J. Sh. A venerable aspect!

[*Aside.*

Age sits with decent grace upon his visage,
And worthily becomes his silver locks;
He wears the marks of many years well-spent,
Of virtue, truth well try'd, and wise experience;
A friend like this, would suit my sorrow well.
Fortune, I fear me, Sir, has meant you ill, [*To Dumont.*
Who pays your merit with that scanty pittance,
Which my poor hand and humble roof can give.
But to supply these golden vantages,
Which elsewhere you might find, expect to meet
A just regard and value for your worth,
The welcome of a friend, and the free partnership
Of all that little good the world allows me.

Dum. You over-rate me much; and all my answer
Must be my future truth; let that speak for me,
And make up my deserving.

J. Sh. Are you of England?

Dum. No, gracious lady, Flanders claims my birth,
At Antwerp has my constant bidding been,
Where sometimes I have known more plenteous days,
Than those which now my failing age affords.

J. Sh. Alas! at Antwerp! — Oh forgive my tears!

[*Weeping.*

They fall for my offences — and must fall
 Long, long, e'er they shall wash my stains away.
 You knew perhaps—oh grief! oh shame!—my husband.

Dum. I knew him well --- but stay this flood of anguish,
 The senseless grave feels not your pious sorrows :
 Three years and more are past, since I was bid,
 With many of our common friends, to wait him
 To his last peaceful mansion. I attended,
 Sprinkled his clay-cold corse with holy drops,
 According to our church's rev'rend rite,
 And saw him laid in hallow'd ground to rest.

J. Sh. Oh! that my soul had known no joy but him,
 That I had liv'd within his guiltless arms,
 And dying slept in innocence beside him!
 But now his honest dust abhors the fellowship,
 And scorns to mix with mine.

Enter a servant.

Serv. The lady Alicia; attends your leisure.

J. Sh. Say I wish to see her. *[Exit servant.]*

Please, gentle Sir, one moment to retire,
 I'll wait you on the instant; and inform you
 Of each unhappy circumstance, in which
 Your friendly aid and counsel much may stead me.

[Exeunt Bellmour and Dumont.]

Enter Alicia.

Alic. Still, my fair friend, still shall I find you thus?
 Still shall these sighs heave after one another,
 These trickling drops chase one another still,
 As if the posting messenger of grief,
 Could overtake the hours fled far away,
 And make old time come back?

J. Sh. No, my Alicia,
 Heav'n and his saints be witness to my thoughts,
 There is no hour of all my life o'erpast,
 That I could wish should take its turn again.

Alic. And yet some of those days my friend has known,
 Some of those years might pass for golden ones,

At least, if womankind can judge of happiness.
 What could we wish, we who delight in empire,
 Whose beauty is our sov'reign good, and gives us
 Our reasons to rehell, and pow'r to reign,
 What could we more than to behold a monarch,
 Lovely, renown'd, a conqueror, and young,
 Bound in our chains, and sighing at our feet?

J. Sh. 'Tis true, the royal Edward was a wonder,
 The goodly pride of all our English youth;
 He was the very joy of all that saw him,
 Form'd to delight, to love, and to persuade.
 Impassive spirits, and angelic natures
 Might have been charm'd, like yielding human weakness,
 Stoop'd from their heav'n, and listen'd to his talking.
 But what had I to do with kings and courts?
 My humble lot had cast me far beneath him;
 And that he was the first of all mankind,
 The bravest and most lovely, was my curse.

Alic. Sure, something more than fortune join'd your
 Nor could his greatness, and his gracious form, [loves;
 Be elsewhere match'd so well, as to the sweetness
 And beauty of my friend.

J. Sh. Name him no more:
 He was the bane and ruin of my peace.
 This anguish and these tears, these are the legacies
 His fatal love has left me. Thou wilt see me,
 Believe me, my Alicia, thou wilt see me,
 E'er yet a few short days pass o'er my head,
 Abandon'd to the very utmost wretchedness.
 The hand of power has seiz'd almost the whole
 Of what was left for needy life's support;
 Shortly thou wilt behold me poor, and kneeling
 Before thy charitable door for bread.

Alic. Joy of my life, my dearest Shore, forbear
 To wound my heart with thy foreboding sorrows,
 Raise thy sad soul to better hopes than these,
 Lift up thine eyes, and let them shine once more,

Bright as the morning sun above the mists.
Exert thy charms, seek out the stern protector,
And soothe his savage temper with thy beauty :
Spite of his deadly unrelenting nature,
He shall be mov'd to pity and redress thee.

J. Sh. My form, alas ! has long forgot to please ;
The scene of beauty and delight is chang'd,
No roses bloom upon my fading cheek,
Nor laughing graces wanton in my eyes ;
But haggard grief, lean-looking fallow care,
And pining discontent, a rueful train,
Dwell on my brow, all hideous and forlorn.
One only shadow of a hope is left me ;
The noble-minded Hastings, of his goodness,
Has kindly underta'en to be my advocate,
And move my humble suit to angry Gloster.

Alic. Does Hastings undertake to plead your cause ?
But wherefore should he not ? Hastings has eyes ;
The gentle lord has a right tender heart,
Melting and easy, yielding to impression,
And catching the soft flame from each new beauty ;
But yours shall charm him long.

J. Sh. Away, you flatterer !
Nor charge his gen'rous meaning with a weakness,
Which his great soul and virtue must disdain.
Too much of love thy hapless friend has prov'd,
Too many giddy foolish hours are gone,
And in fantastic measures danc'd away :
May the remaining few know only friendship.
So thou, my dearest, truest, best Alicia,
Vouchsafe to lodge me in thy gentle heart,
A partner there ; I will give up mankind,
Forget the transports of encreasing passion,
And all the pangs we feel for its decay.

Alic. Live ! live and reign for ever in my bosom.

[Embracing.

Safe and unrivall'd there possess thy own ;

And you, ye brightest of the stars above,
 Ye saints that once were women here below,
 Be witness of the truth, the holy friendship,
 Which here to this my other self I vow,
 If I not hold her nearer to my soul,
 Than ev'ry other joy the world can give,
 Let poverty, deformity and shame,
 Distraction and despair seize me on earth,
 Let not my faithless ghost have peace hereafter,
 Nor taste the bliss of your celestial fellowship.

J. Sh. Yes, thou art true, and only thou art true;
 Therefore these jewels, once the lavish bounty
 Of royal Edward's love, I trust to thee; [*Giving a casket.*
 Receive this all, that I can call my own,
 And let it rest unknown, and safe with thee:
 That if the state's injustice should oppress me,
 Strip me of all, and turn me out a wanderer,
 My wretchedness may find relief from thee,
 And shelter from the storm.

Alic. My all is thine;
 One common hazard shall attend us both,
 And both be fortunate, or both be wretched.
 But let thy fearful doubting heart be still,
 The saints and angels have thee in their charge,
 And all things shall be well. Think not, the good,
 The gentle deeds of mercy thou hast done,
 Shall die forgotten all; the poor, the pris'ner,
 The fatherless, the friendless, and the widow,
 Who daily own the bounty of thy hand,
 Shall cry to heav'n, and pull a blessing on thee;
 Ev'n man, the merciless insulter man,
 Man, who rejoices in our sex's weakness,
 Shall pity thee, and with unwonted goodness,
 Forget thy failings, and record thy praise.

J. Sh. Why should I think that man will do for me
 What yet he never did for wretches like me?
 Mark by what partial justice we are judg'd;

Such is the fate unhappy women find,
 And such the curse intail'd upon our kind,
 That man, the lawless libertine, may rove,
 Free and unquestion'd thro' the wilds of love;
 While woman, sense and nature's easy fool,
 If poor weak woman swerve from virtue's rule,
 If strongly charm'd, she leave the thorny way,
 And in the softer paths of pleasure stray;
 Ruin ensues, reproach and endless shame,
 And one false step entirely damns her fame.
 In vain with tears the loss she may deplore,
 In vain look back to what she was before,
 She sets, like stars that fall, to rise no more.

}
 [Exeunt:

ACT II. SCENE I.

SCENE continues.

Enter Alicia.

[*Speaking to Jane Shore as entering.*

Alic. **N**O farther, gentle friend; good angels guard you,
 And spread their gracious wings about your
 slumbers.

The drowsy night grows on the world, and now
 The busy craftsmen and o'erlabour'd hind,
 Forget the travail of the day in sleep:
 Care only wakes, and moping pensiveness;
 With meagre discontented looks they sit,
 And watch the wasting of the midnight taper.
 Such vigils must I keep, so wakes my soul,
 Restless and self-tormented; Oh false Happings!
 Thou hast destroy'd my peace.

[*Knocking without.*

What noise is that?

What visitor is this, who with bold freedom

Breaks in upon the peaceful night and rest,
With such a rude reproach ?

Enter a servant.

Serv. One from the court,
Lord Hastings (as I think) demands my lady.

Alic. Hastings ! be still my heart, and try to meet him
With his own arts : with falsehood — But he comes.

Enter Lord Hastings.

[Speaks to a servant as entering.]

L. Hast. Dismiss my train, and wait alone without.
Alicia here ! unfortunate encounter !
But, be it as it may.

Alic. When humbly, thus,
The great descend to visit the afflicted,
When thus unmindful of their rest they come
To sooth the sorrows of the midnight mourner :
Comfort comes with them, like the golden sun,
Dispells the sullen shades with her sweet influence,
And cheers the melancholy house of care.

L. Hast. 'Tis true, I would not over-rate a courtesy,
Nor let the coldness of delay hang on it,
To nip and blast its favour, like a frost ;
But rather chose, at this late hour, to come,
That your fair friend may know I have prevail'd ;
The Lord Protector has receiv'd her suit,
And means to shew her grace.

Alic. My friend ! my lord.

L. Hast. Yes, lady, yours : none has a right more ample
To ask my pow'r than you.

Alic. I want the words,
To pay you back a compliment so courtly ;
But my heart guesses at the friendly meaning,
And wo'not die your debtor.

L. Hast. 'Tis well, madam.
But I would see your friend.

Alic. Oh thou false lord !
I wou'd be mistress of my heaving heart,

Stifle this rising rage, and learn from thee
To dress my face in easy dull indifference :
But 'two 'not be, my wrongs will tear their way.
And rush at once upon thee.

L. Haft. Are you wise !

Have you the use of reason ? do you wake ?
What means this raving ! this transporting passion ?

Alic. O thou cruel traitor ! thou insulting tyrant,
Dost thou behold my poor distracted heart,
Thus rent with agonizing love and rage,
And ask me what it means ? art thou not false ?
And I not scorn'd, forsaken and abandon'd,
Left, like a common wretch, to shame and infamy,
Giv'n up to be the sport of villains tongues,
Of laughing parasites, and lewd buffoons ;
And all because my soul has doated on thee
With love, with truth, and tenderness unutterable ?

L. Haft. Are these the proofs of tenderness and love ?
These endless quarrels, discontents, and jealousies,
These never-ceasing wailings and complainings,
These furious starts, these whirlwinds of the soul,
Which every other moment rise to madness ?

Alic. What proof, alas ! have I not given of love ?
What have I not abandon'd to thy arms ?
Have I not set at nought my noble birth,
A spotless fame, and an unblemish'd race,
The peace of innocence, and pride of virtue ?
My prodigality has giv'n thee all ;
And now I've nothing left me to bestow,
You hate the wretched bankrupt you have made.

L. Haft. Why am I thus pursu'd from place to place,
Kept in the view, and cross'd at every turn ?
In vain I fly, and like a hunted deer,
Scud o'er the lands, and hasten to the covert ;
E'er I can reach my safety, you o'ertake me
With the swift malice of some keen reproach,
And drive the winged shaft deep in my heart.

Alic. Hither you fly, and here you seek repose;
Spite of the poor deceit, your arts are known,
Your pious, charitable, midnight visits.

L. Haft. If you are wise, and prize your peace of mind,
Yet take the friendly counsel of my love;
Believe me true, nor listen to your jealousy,
Let not that devil, which undoes your sex,
That cursed curiosity seduce you,
To hunt for needless secrets, which neglected,
Shall never hurt your quiet, but once known,
Shall sit upon your heart, pinch it with pain,
And banish the sweet sleep for ever from you.
Go to ——— be yet advis'd ———

Alic. Dost thou in scorn
Preach patience to my rage? and bid me tamely
Sit like a poor contented idiot down,
Nor dare to think thou'lt wrong'd me — ruin seize thee,
And swift perdition overtake thy treachery!
Have I the least remaining cause to doubt?
Hast thou endeavour'd once to hide thy falshood?
To hide it, might have spoke some little tenderness,
And shewn thee half unwilling to undo me:
But thou disdain'st the weakness of humanity,
Thy words, and all thy actions, have confess'd it;
Ev'n now thy eyes avow it, now they speak,
And insolently own the glorious villainy.

L. Haft. Well then, I own my heart has broke your chains.
Patient I bore the painful bondage long,
At length my gen'rous love disdains your tyranny;
The bitterness and stings of taunting jealousy,
Vexatious days, and jarring joyless nights,
Have driv'n him forth to seek some safer shelter,
Where he may rest his weary wings in peace.

Alic. You triumph! do! and with gigantic pride,
Defy impending vengeance. Heav'n shall wink;
No more his arm shall roll the dreadful thunder,
Nor send his lightnings forth: No more his justice

Shall visit the presuming sons of men,
But perjury, like thine, shall dwell in safety.

L. Haft. Whate'er my fate decrees from me hereafter,
Be present to me now, my better angel !
Preserve me from the storm which threatens now,
And if I have beyond atonement sinn'd,
Let any other kind of plague o'ertake me,
So I escape the fury of that tongue.

Alic. Thy pray'r is heard--I go--but know, proud lord,
Howe'er thou scorn'st the weakness of my sex,
'This feeble hand may find the means to reach thee,
Howe'er sublime in pow'r, and greatness plac'd,
With royal favour guarded round, and grac'd ;
On eagle's wings my rage shall urge her flight,
And hurl thee headlong from thy topmost height ;
'Then like thy fate, superior will I sit,
And view thee fall'n, and grov'ling at my feet ;
See thy last breath with indignation go,
And tread thee sinking to the shades below. [*Exit Alic.*]

L. Haft. How fierce a fiend is passion? with what wildness,
What tyranny untam'd, it reigns in woman !
Unhappy sex ! whose easy yielding temper
Gives way to ev'ry appetite alike ;
Each gust of inclination, uncontroul'd,
Sweeps thro' their souls, and sets them in an uproar ;
Each motion of the heart rises to fury,
And love in their weak bosoms is a rage
As terrible as hate, and as destructive.
So the wind roars o'er the wide fenceless ocean,
And heaves the billows of the boiling deep,
Alike from north, from south, from east, from west,
With equal force the tempest blows by turns
From every corner of the seaman's compass.
But soft ye now —— for here comes one disclaims
Strife, and her wrangling train : of equal elements,
Without one jarring atom was she form'd,
And gentleness, and joy, making up her being.

Enter Jane Shore.

Forgive me, fair-one, if officious friendship
Intrudes on your repose, and comes thus late,
To greet you with the tidings of success.
The princely Gloster has vouchsaf'd you hearing,
To-morrow he expects you at the court;
There plead your cause with never-failing beauty,
Speak all your griefs, and find a full redress.

J. Sh. Thus humbly let your lowly servant bend;
Thus let me bow my grateful knee to earth, [*Kneeling.*
And bless your noble nature for this goodness.

L. Hast. Rise gentle dame, you wrong my meaning much,
Think me not guilty of a thought so vain,
To sell my courtesy for thanks like these.

J. Sh. 'Tis true, your bounty is beyond my speaking:
But tho' my mouth be dumb, my heart shall thank you;
And when it melts before the throne of mercy,
Mourning, and bleeding, for my past offences,
My fervent soul shall breath one prayer for you,
If prayers of such a wretch are heard on high,
That Heav'n will pay you back, when most you need,
The grace and goodness you have shewn to me.

L. Hast. If there be aught of merit in my service,
Impute it there where most 'tis due, to love;
Be kind, my gentle mistress, to my wishes,
And satisfy my panting heart with beauty.

J. Sh. Alas! my lord ———

L. Hast. Why bend thy eyes to earth?
Wherefore these looks of heaviness and sorrow?
Why breathes that sigh, my love? and wherefore falls
This trickling show'r of tears, to stain thy sweetness?

J. Sh. If pity dwells within your noble breast,
(As sure it does) oh speak not to me thus.

L. Hast. Can I behold thee, and not speak of love?
Ev'n now, thus sadly as thou stand'st before me,
Thus desolate, dejected, and forlorn,
Thy softness steals upon my yielding senses,

'Till my soul faints, and sickens with desire;
How canst thou give this motion to my heart,
And bid my tongue be still?

J. Sh. Cast round your eyes
Upon the high-born beauties of the court;
Behold, like opening roses, where they bloom,
Sweet to the sense, unsully'd all and spotless;
There chuse some worthy partner of your heart
To fill your arms, and bless your virtuous bed;
Nor turn your eyes this way, where sin and misery,
Like loathsome weeds, have over-run the soil,
And the destroyer shame has laid all waste.

L. Haft. What means this peevish, this fantastick change?
Where is thy wonted pleasantness of face?
Thy wonted graces, and thy dimpled smiles?
Where hast thou lost thy wit, and sportive mirth?
That chearful heart, which us'd to dance for ever,
And cast a day of gladness all around thee?

J. Sh. Yes, I will own I merit the reproach;
And for those foolish days of wanton pride,
My soul is justly humbled to the dust:
All tongues, like yours, are licenc'd to upbraid me,
Still to repeat my guilt, to urge my infamy,
And treat me like that abject thing I have been.
Yet let the saints be witness to this truth,
That now, tho' late, I look with horror back,
That I detest my wretched self, and curse
My past polluted life. All-judging heaven
Who knows my crimes, has seen my sorrow for them.

L. Haft. No more of this dull stuff. 'Tis time enough
To whine, and mortify thyself with penance,
When the decaying sense is pall'd with pleasure,
And weary nature tires in her last stage:
Then weep and tell thy beads, when alt'ring rheums
Have stain'd the lustre of thy starry eyes,
And failing palsies shake thy wither'd hand.
The present moments claim more gen'rous use;

Thy beauty, night and solitude reproach me,
 For having talk'd thus long — Come let me press thee,
[Laying hold on her.]

Pant to thy bosom, sink into thy arms,
 And lose myself in the luxurious fold.

J. Sh. Never! by those chaste lights above, I swear,
 My soul shall never know pollution more;
 Forbear my lord! — Here let me rather die, [Kneeling.]
 Let quick destruction overtake me here,
 And end my sorrows and my shame for ever.

L. Hast. Away with this perverseness, — 'tis too much;
 Nay, if you strive — 'tis monstrous affectation. [Striving.]

J. Sh. Retire! I beg you leave me —

L. Hast. Thus to coy it! —

With one who knows you too.

J. Sh. For mercy's sake —

L. Hast. Ungrateful woman! is it thus you pay
 My services? —

J. Sh. Abandon me to ruin —

Rather than urge me —

L. Hast. This way to your chamber, [Pulling her.]
 There if you struggle —

J. Sh. Help! oh gracious Heav'n!
 Help! save me! help! [Crying out.]

Enter Dumont, he interposes.

Dum. My lord! for honour's sake —

L. Hast. Hah! what art thou! Be gone!

Dum. My duty calls me

To my attendance on my mistress here.

J. Sh. For pity let me go —

L. Hast. Avaunt! base groom,
 At distance wait, and know thy office better.

Dum. Forego your hold, my lord! 'tis most unmanly,
 This violence —

L. Hast. Avoid the room this moment,
 Or I will tread thy soul out.

Dum. No, my lord —

The common ties of manhood call me now,
And bid me thus stand up in the defence
Of an oppress'd, unhappy, helpless woman.

L. Haft. And dost thou know me, slave?

Dum. Yes, thou proud lord!

I know thee well, know thee with each advantage,
Which wealth, or power, or noble birth can give thee.
I know thee too for one who stains those honours,
And blots a long illustrious line of ancestry,
By poorly daring thus to wrong a woman.

L. Haft. 'Tis wondrous well! I see my saint-like dame,
You stand provided of your braves and ruffians,
To man your cause, and bluster in your brothel.

Dum. Take back the foul reproach, unmanner'd railer;
Nor urge my rage too far, lest thou shouldst find
I have as daring spirits in my blood
As thou, or any of thy race e'er boasted;
And tho' no gaudy titles grac'd my birth,
Titles, the servile courtier's lean reward,
Sometimes the pay of virtue, but more oft
The hire which greatness gives to slaves and sycophants,
Yet Heav'n that made me honest, made me more
Than ever king did, when he made a lord.

L. Haft. Insolent villain! henceforth let this teach thee
[*Draws and strikes him.*

The distance 'twixt a peasant and a prince.

Dum. Nay then, my lord, (*drawing.*) learn you by this
how well

An arm resolv'd can guard its master's life. [They fight.

J. Sh. Oh my distracting fears! hold, for sweet heav'n.

[They fight, Dumont disarms Lord Hastings.

L. Haft. Confusion! baffled by a base-born hind!

Dum. Now, haughty Sir, where is our diff'rence now?
Your life is in my hand, and did not honour,
The gentleness of blood and inborn virtue
(Howe'er unworthy I may seem to you)
Plead in my bosom, I should take the forfeit.
But wear your sword again; and know, a lord

Oppos'd against a man is but a man.

L. Haſt. Curſe on my failing hand ! your better fortune
Has giv'n you vantage o'er me ; but perhaps
Your triumph may be bought with dear repentance. [*Ex.*

J. Sh. Alas ! what have you done ! know you the power,
The mightineſs that waits upon this lord ?

Dum. Fear not, my worthieſt miſtreſs ; 'tis a cauſe,
In which Heaven's guard ſhall wait you. O purſue,
Purſue the ſacred counſels of your ſoul,
Which urge you on to virtue ; let not danger,
Nor the encumbring world make faint your purpoſe.
Aſſiſting angels ſhall conduct your ſteps,
Bring you to bliſs, and crown your end with peace.

J. Sh. Oh that my head were laid, my ſad eyes clos'd,
And my cold corſe wound in my ſhroud to reſt ;
My painful heart will never ceaſe to beat,
Will never know a moment's peace till then.

Dum. Wou'd you be happy ? leave this fatal place,
Fly from the court's pernicious neighbourhood ;
Where innocence is ſham'd, and bluſhing modeſty
Is made the ſcorner's jeſt ; where hate, deceit,
And deadly ruin, wear the maſques of beauty,
And draw deluded fools with ſhews of pleaſure.

J. Sh. Where ſhould I fly ; thus helpleſs and forlorn,
Of friends, and all the means of life bereft ? [*you,*

Dum. Bellmour, whoſe friendly care ſtill wakes to ſerve
Has found you out a little peaceful refuge,
Far from the court, and the tumultuous city.
Within an antient forreſt's ample verge,
There ſtands a lonely, but a healthful dwelling,
Built for convenience, and the uſe of life :
Around it fallows, meads, and paſtures fair,
A little garden, and a limpid brook,
By nature's own contrivance ſeem diſpos'd ;
No neighbours, but a few poor ſimple clowns,
Honeſt and true, with a well-meaning prieſt :
No faction or domeſtic fury's rage,

Did e'er disturb the quiet of that place,
 When the contending nobles shook the land
 With York and Lancaster's disputed sway.
 Your virtue there may find a safe retreat
 From the insulting powers of wicked greatness.

J. Sh. Can there be so much happiness in store?
 A cell like that, is all my hopes aspire to.
 Haste then, and thither let us take our flight,
 E'er the clouds gather, and the wintry sky
 Descends in storms to intercept our passage.

Dum. Will you then go? you glad my very soul!
 Banish your fears, cast all your cares on me;
 Plenty, and ease, and peace of mind shall wait you,
 And make your latter days of life most happy.
 Oh, lady! but I must not, cannot tell you,
 How anxious I have been for all your dangers,
 And how my heart rejoices at your safety.
 So when the spring renews the flow'ry field,
 And warns the pregnant nightingale to build,
 She seeks the safest shelter of the wood,
 Where she may trust her little tuneful brood;
 Where no rude swains her shady cells may know,
 No serpents climb, nor blasting winds may blow;
 Fond of the chosen place, she views it o'er,
 Sits there, and wanders thro' the grove no more:
 Warbling she charms it each returning night,
 And loves it with a mother's great delight. [Exeunt.]

ACT III. SCENE I.

SCENE, *the Court.*

Enter Alicia with a Paper.

Alic. **T**HIS paper, to the great protector's hands,
 With care and secrecy must be convey'd;
 His bold ambition now avows its aim,
 To pluck the crown from Edward's infant brow,

And fix it on his own. I know he holds
 My faithless Hastings, adverse to his hopes,
 And much devoted to the orphan king;
 On that I built: this paper meets his doubts,
 And marks my hated rival as the cause
 Of Hastings' zeal for his dead master's sons.
 Oh jealousy! thou bane of pleasing friendship,
 Thou worst invader of our tender bosoms;
 How does thy rancour poison all our softness?
 And turn our gentle natures into bitterness?
 See where she comes! once my heart's dearest blessing,
 Now my chang'd eyes are blasted with her beauty,
 Loath that known face, and sicken to behold her.

Enter Jane Shore.

J. Sh. Now whither shall I fly, to find relief?
 What charitable hand will aid me now?
 Will stay my failing steps, support my ruins,
 And heal my wounded mind with balmy comfort?
 Oh, my Alicia!

Alic. What new grief is this?
 What unforeseen misfortune has surpriz'd thee,
 That racks thy tender heart thus?

J. Sh. Oh! Dumont!

Alic. Say! what of him?

J. Sh. That friendly, honest man,
 Whom Bellmour brought of late to my assistance,
 On whose kind cares, whose diligence and faith,
 My surest trust was built, this very morn
 Was seiz'd on by the cruel hand of pow'r,
 Forc'd from my house, and born away to prison.

Alic. To prison, said you! can you guess the cause?

J. Sh. Too well, I fear. His bold defence of me,
 Has drawn the vengeance of Lord Hastings on him.

Alic. Lord Hastings! Hah!

J. Sh. Some fitter time must tell thee
 The tale of my hard hap. Upon the present
 Hang all my poor, my last remaining hopes.

Within this paper is my suit contain'd;
 Here, as the princely Gloster passes forth,
 I wait to give it on my humble knees,
 And move him for redress.

[*She gives the paper to Alicia, who opens
 and seems to read it.*]

Alic. Aside.] Now for a wile,
 To sting my thoughtless rival to the heart;
 To blast her fatal beauties, and divide her
 For ever from my perjur'd Hastings' eyes:
 The wanderer may then look back to me,
 And turn to his forsaken home again:
 Their fashions are the same, it cannot fail.

[*Pulling out the other paper.*]

J. Sh. But see the great protector comes this way,
 Attended by a train of waiting courtiers.
 Give me the paper, friend.

Alic. [Aside.] For love and vengeance!

[*She gives her the other paper.*]

*Enter the Duke of Gloster, Sir Richard Ratcliffe,
 Catesby, Courtiers and other attendants.*

J. Sh. [Kneeling.] O noble Gloster, turn thy gracious eye,
 Incline thy pitying ear to my complaint,
 A poor undone, forsaken, helpless woman,
 Intreats a little bread for charity,
 To feed her wants, and save her life from perishing.

Gloster. Arise, fair dame, and dry your wat'ry eyes.

[*Receiving the paper, and raising her.*]

Beshrew me, but 'twere pity of his heart,
 That could refuse a boon to such a suitress.
 Y'have got a noble friend to be your advocate;
 A worthy and right gentle lord he is,
 And to his trust most true. This present, now,
 Some matters of the state detain our leisure;
 Those once dispatch'd, we'll call for you anon.
 And give your griefs redress. Go to! be comforted.

J. Sh. Good heavens repay your highness for this pity,

And show'r down blessings on your princely head.
 Come my Alicia, reach thy friendly arm,
 And help me to support that feeble frame;
 That nodding totters with oppressive woe,
 And sinks beneath its load. *[Ex. J. Shore and Alic.]*

Gloft. Now by my holidame!
 Heavy of heart she seems, and sore afflicted.
 But thus is it when rude calamity
 Lays its strong gripe upon these mincing minions;
 The dainty gew-gaw forms dissolve at once,
[Seeming to read.]

And shiver at the shock. What says her paper?
 Ha! what is this? come nearer Ratcliffe, Catesby!
 Mark the contents, and then divine the meaning:

[He reads]

Wonder not, princely Gloster, at the notice
 This paper brings you from a friend unknown;
 Lord Hastings is inclin'd to call you master,
 And kneel to Richard, as to England's king;
 But Shore's bewitching wife misleads his heart,
 And draws his service to King Edward's sons:
 Drive her away, you break the charm that holds him,
 And he, and all his powers attend on you.

Rat. 'Tis wonderful!

Cat. The means by which it came,
 Yet strangers too!

Gloft. You saw it given but now.

Rat. She could not know the purport.

Gloft. No, 'tis plain —————

She knows it not, it levels at her life;
 Should she presume to prat of such high matters,
 The meddling harlot! dear she should abide it.

Cat. What hand soe'er it comes from, be assur'd,
 It means your highness well —————

Gloft. Upon the instant,
 Lord Hastings will be here; this morn I mean,
 To prove him to the quick; then if he flinch,

No more but this, away with him at once,
He must be mine or nothing ——— but he comes,
Draw near this way and observe me well. [*They whisper.*

Enter Lord Hastings.

L. Hast. This foolish woman hangs about my heart,
Lingers and wanders in my fancy still;
'This coyness is put on, 'tis art and cunning,
And worn to urge desire ——— I must possess her;
The groom, who lift his sawcy head against me,
E'er this, is humbled, and repents his daring.
Perhaps, ev'n she may profit by th' example,
And teach her beauty not to scorn my pow'r.

Gloft. This do, and wait me e're the council sits.

[Exeunt Rat. and Cates.]

My lord, y'are well encounter'd, here has been
A fair petitioner this morning with us;
Believe me she has won me much to pity her:
Alas! her gentle nature was not made
To buffet with adversity. I told her,
How worthily her cause you had befriended;
How much for your good sake we meant to do,
That you had spoke, and all things shou'd be well.

L. Hast. Your highness binds me ever to your service.

Gloft. You know your friendship is most potent with us,
And shares our power. But of this enough,
For we have other matters for your ear:
The state is out of tune; distracting fears,
And jealous doubts jarr in our public counsels;
Amidst the wealthy city, murmurs rise,
Lewd railings, and reproach, on those that rule,
With open scorn of government; hence credit,
And public trust 'twixt man and man are broke.
The golden streams of commerce are with-held,
Which fed the wants of needy hinds, and artizans,
Who therefore curse the great, and their rebellion.

L. Hast. The resty knaves are over-run with ease,
As plenty ever is the nurse of faction:

If in good days, like these, the headstrong herd
Grow madly wanton and repine; it is
Because the reins of power are held too slack,
And reverend authority of late
Has won a face of mercy more than justice.

Gloft. Beshrew my heart! but you have well divin'd
The source of these disorders. Who can wonder
If riot and mis-rule o'erturn the realm,
When the crown sits upon a baby brow?
Plainly to speak; hence comes the gen'ral cry,
And sum of all complaint: 'twill ne'er be well
With England (thus they talk) while children govern.

L. Haft. 'Tis true the king is young; but what of that?
We feel no want of Edward's riper years,
While Gloster's valour, and most princely wisdom,
So well supply our infant sov'reign's place,
His youth's support, and guardian of his throne.

Gloft. The council (much I'm bound to thank 'em for't)
Have plac'd a pageant scepter in my hand,
Barren of pow'r, and subject to controul;
Scorn'd by my foes, and useless to my friends.
Oh, worthy lord! were mine the rule indeed,
I think, I should not suffer rank offence
At large to lord it in the common-weal;
Nor wou'd the realm be rent by discord thus,
Thus fear and doubt betwixt disputed titles.

L. Haft. Of this I am to learn; as not supposing
A doubt like this —————

Gloft. Ay, Marry! but there is —————
And that of much concern. Have you not heard
How on a late occasion, Doctor Shaw
Has mov'd the people much about the lawfulness
Of Edward's issue? by right grave authority
Of learning and religion, plainly proving,
A bastard scion never should be grafted
Upon a royal stock; from thence, at full
Discourfing on my brother's former contrait

To Lady Elizabeth Lucy, long before
His jolly match with that same buxom widow
The queen he left behind him —————

L. Haft. Ill befall

Such meddling priests, who kindle up confusion,
And vex the quiet world with their vain scruples;
By Heav'n 'tis done in perfect spite of peace.

Did not the king,

Our royal master Edward, in concurrence
With his estates assembled, well determine
What course the sov'reign rule should take henceforward?
When shall the deadly heat of faction cease,
When shall our long divided land have rest,
If every peevish, moody malecontent
Shall set the senseless rabble in an uproar?
Fright them with dangers, and perplex their brains,
Each day with some fantastic giddy change?

Glost. What if some patriot for the public good,
Should vary from your scheme, new-mould the state?

L. Haft. Curse on the innovating hand attempts it!
Remember him, the villain, righteous Heaven,
In thy great day of vengeance: blast the traitor
And his pernicious counsels; who for wealth,
For pow'r, the pride of greatness, or revenge,
Should plunge his native land in civil wars.

Glost. You go too far, my lord.

L. Haft. Your highness' pardon —————

Have we so soon forgot those days of ruin,
When York and Lancaster drew forth the battles!
When, like a matron, butcher'd by her sons,
And cast beside some common way of spectacle
Of horror and affright to passers-by,
Our groaning country bled at every vein,
When murders, rapes, and massacres prevail'd;
When churches, palaces, and cities blaz'd;
When insolence and barbarism triumph'd,
And swept away distinction; peasants trod

Upon the necks of nobles: low were laid
The reverend crozier, and the holy mitre,
And desolation cover'd all the land;
Who can remember this, and not, like me,
Here vow to sheath a dagger in his heart,
Whose damn'd ambition would renew those horrors,
And set, once more, that scene of blood before us?

Gloft. How now! so hot!

L. Haft. So brave, and so resolv'd.

Gloft. Is then our friendship of so little moment,
That you could arm your hand against my life?

L. Haft. I hope your highness does not think I meant it,
No, Heaven forbid that e'er your princely person
Should come within the scope of my resentment.

Gloft. Oh! noble Hastings! nay, I must embrace you;
[Embraces him.]

By holy Paul! y'are a right honest man;
The time is full of danger and distrust,
And warns us to be wary. Hold me not
Too apt for jealousy and light surmize,
If when I meant to lodge you next my heart,
I put your truth to trial. Keep your loyalty,
And live your king and country's best support:
For me, I ask no more than honour gives,
To think me yours, and rank me with your friends.

L. Haft. Accept what thanks a grateful heart should pay.
Oh! princely Gloster! judge me not ungentle,
Of manners rude, and insolent of speech,
If when the public safety is in question,
My zeal flows warm and eager from my tongue.

Gloft. Enough of this: to deal in wordy compliment
Is much against the plainness of my nature;
I judge you by myself, a clear true spirit,
And, as such, once more join you to my bosom;
Farewel, and be my friend. [Exit Gloster.]

L. Haft. I am not read,
Not skill'd and practis'd in the arts of greatness,

To kindle thus, and give a scope to passion.
 The Duke is surely noble; but he touch'd me
 Ev'n on the tend'rest point; the master-string
 That makes most harmony or discord to me.
 I own the glorious subject fires my breast,
 And my soul's darling passion stands confest;
 Beyond or love's or friendship's sacred band,
 Beyond myself I prize my native land:
 On this foundation would I build my fame,
 And emulate the Greek and Roman name;
 Think England's peace bought cheaply with my blood,
 And die with pleasure for my country's good. [Exit.]

A C T IV. S C E N E I.

S C E N E *continues.*

Enter Duke of Gloster, Ratcliffe, and Catesby.

Gloft. **T**HIS was the sum of all; that he would brook
 No alteration in the present state.
 Marry! at last, the testy gentleman
 Was almost mov'd to bid us bold defiance;
 But there I dropt the argument, and changing
 The first design and purport of my speech,
 I prais'd his good affection to young Edward,
 And left him to believe my thoughts like his.
 Proceed we then in this fore-mention'd matter,
 As nothing bound or trusting to his friendship.

Rat. Ill does it thus befall. I cou'd have wish'd
 This lord had stood with us. His friends are wealthy,
 Thereto, his own possessions large and mighty;
 The vassals and dependants on his power
 Firm in adherence, ready, bold and many;
 His name had been of vantage to your highness,
 And stood our present purpose much in stead.

Gloſt. This wayward and perverſe declining from us,
Has warrant'd at full the friendly notice,
Which we this morn receiv'd. I hold it certain,
This pulling whining harlot rules his reaſon,
And prompts his zeal for Edward's baſtard brood.

Cat. If ſhe have ſuch dominion o'er his heart,
And turn it at her will, you rule her fate;
And ſhould by inference and apt deduction,
Be arbiter of his. Is not her bread
The very means immediate to her being,
The bounty of your hand? why does ſhe live,
If not to yield obedience to your pleaſure,
To ſpeak, to act, to think as you command?

Rat. Let her inſtruct her tongue to bear your meſſage;
Teach every grace to ſmile in your behalf,
And her deluding eyes to gloat for you;
His ductile reaſon will be wound about,
Be led and turn'd again, ſay and unſay,
Receive the yoke, and yield exact obedience.

Gloſt. Your counſel likes me well, it ſhall be follow'd:
She waits without attending on her ſuit.
Go, call her in, and leave us here alone. [*Ex. Rat. and Cat.*]
How poor a thing is he, how worthy ſcorn,
Who leaves the guidance of imperial manhood
To ſuch a paltry piece of ſtuff as this is!
A moppet made of prettineſs and pride;
That oftner does her giddy fancies change,
Than glittering dew-drops in the ſun do colours —
Now ſhame upon it! was our reaſon given
For ſuch a uſe! to be thus puff'd about
Like a dry leaf, an idle ſtraw, a feather,
The ſport of every whiſſing blaſt that blows?
Beſhrew my heart, but it is wondrous ſtrange;
Sure there is ſomething more than witchcraft in them,
That maſters ev'n the wiſeſt of us all.

Enter Jane Shore.

Oh! you are come most fitly. We have ponder'd
On this your grievance: and tho' some there are,
Nay, and those great ones too, who would enforce
The rigour of our power to afflict you,
And bear a heavy hand, yet fear not you,
We've ta'en you to our favour, our protection
Shall stand between, and shield you from mishap.

J. Sh. The blessings of a heart with anguish broken,
And rescu'd from despair, attend your highness.
Alas! my gracious lord! what have I done
To kindle such relentless wrath against me?
If in the days of all my past offences,
When most my heart was lifted with delight,
If I with-held my morsel from the hungry,
Forgot the widow's want, and orphan's cry;
If I have known a good I have not shar'd,
Nor call'd the poor to take his portion with me,
Let my worst enemies stand forth, and now
Deny the succour, which I gave not then.

Gloster. Marry there are, tho' I believe them not,
Who say you meddle in affairs of state:
That you presume to prattle, like a busy body,
Give your advice, and teach the lords of th' council
What fits the order of the common-weal.

J. Sh. Oh that the busy world, at least in this,
Would take example from a wretch like me!
None then would waste their hours in foreign thoughts,
Forget themselves, and what concerns their peace,
To tread the mazes of fantastic falsehood,
To hunt her idle sounds and flying tales,
Thro' all the giddy noisy courts of rumour;
Malicious slander never wou'd have leisure
To search with prying eyes for faults abroad,
If all, like me, consider'd their own hearts,
And wept the sorrows which they found at home.

Gloster. Go to! I know your pow'r, and tho' I trust not

To ev'ry breath of fame, I'm not to learn
 That Hastings is profess'd your loving vassal.
 But fair befall your beauty: use it wisely,
 And it may stand your fortunes much in stead;
 Give back your forfeit land with large increase,
 And place you high in safety and in honour:
 Nay, I could point a way, the which pursuing,
 You shall not only bring yourself advantage,
 But give the realm much worthy cause to thank you.

J. Sh. Oh! where or how? can my unworthy hand
 Become an instrument of good to any?
 Instruct your lowly slave, and let me fly
 To yield obedience to your dread command.

Gl. Why that's well said---thus then--observe me well,
 The state, for many high and potent reasons,
 Deeming my brother Edward's sons unfit
 For the imperial weight of England's crown

J. Sh. Alas! for pity.

[*Aside.*

Gloss. Therefore have resolv'd
 To set aside their unavailing infancy,
 And vest the sov'reign rule in abler hands.
 This, tho' of great importance to the public,
 Hastings, for very peevishness and spleen,
 Does stubbornly oppose.

J. Sh. Does he! does Hastings!

Gloss. Ay, Hastings.

J. Sh. Reward him for the noble deed, just Heavens:
 For this one action, guard him and distinguish him
 With signal mercies, and with great deliverance,
 Save him from wrong, adversity and shame.
 Let never-fading honours flourish round him,
 And consecrate his name ev'n to time's end:
 Let him know nothing else but good on earth,
 And everlasting blessedness hereafter.

Gloss. How now!

J. Sh. The poor forsaken, royal little ones!
 Shall they be left a prey to savage power?
 Can they lift up their harmless hands in vain,

Or cry to heaven for help, and not be heard?
 Impossible! O gallant generous Hastings,
 Go on, pursue! assert the sacred cause:
 Stand forth, thou proxy of all-ruling providence,
 And save the friendless infants from oppression.
 Saints shall assist thee with prevailing prayers,
 And warring angels combat on thy side.

Gloſt. You're paſſing rich on this ſame heav'nly ſpeech,
 And ſpend it at your pleaſure. Nay, but mark me!
 My favour is not bought with words like theſe.
 Go to ——— you'll teach your tongue another tale.

J. Sh. No, though the royal Edward has undone me,
 He was my king, my gracious maſter ſtill;
 He lov'd me too, tho' 'twas a guilty flame,
 And fatal to my peace, yet ſtill he lov'd me;
 With fondneſs, and with tenderneſs he doated,
 Dwelt in my eyes, and liv'd but in my ſmiles.
 And can I ——— oh my heart abhors the thoughts;
 Stand by, and ſee his children rob'd of right?

Gloſt. Dare not, ev'n for thy ſoul, to thwart me further;
 None of your arts, your feigning, and your foolery,
 Your dainty ſqueamiſh coying it to me.
 Go—to your lord, your paramour, be gone;
 Liſp in his ear, hang wanton on his neck,
 And play your monkey gambols o'er to him:
 You know my purpoſe, look that you purſue it,
 And make him yield obedience to my will.
 Do it—or woe upon thy harlot's head.

J. Sh. Oh that my tongue had every grace of ſpeech,
 Great and commanding as the breath of kings,
 Sweet as the poets numbers, and prevailing
 As ſoft perſuaſion to a love-ſick maid?
 That I had art and eloquence divine!
 To pay my duty to my maſter's aſhes,
 And plead till death the cauſe of injur'd innocence.

Gloſt. Ha! doſt thou brave me, minion! doſt thou know
 How vile, how very a wretch, my pow'r can make thee?

That I can let loose fear, distress and famine,
 To hunt thy heels, like hell-hounds, thro' the world;
 That I can place thee in such abject state,
 As help shall never find thee; where repining,
 Thou shalt sit down, and gnaw the earth for anguish,
 Groan to the pitiless winds without return,
 Howl like the midnight wolf amidst the desert,
 And curse thy life in bitterness and misery?

J. Sh. Let me branded for the public scorn,
 Turn'd forth, and driven to wander like a vagabond,
 Be friendless and forsaken, seek my bread
 Upon the barren wild, and desolate waste,
 Feed on my sighs, and drink my falling tears;
 E'er I consent to teach my lips injustice,
 Or wrong the orphan, who has none to save him.

Gloft. 'Tis well—we'll try the temper of your heart,
 What ho! who waits without!

Enter Ratcliffe, Catesby, and attendants.

Rat. Your highness' pleasure —————

Gloft. Go some of you, and turn this strumpet forth;
 Spurn her into the street, there let her perish,
 And rot upon a dunghill. Thro' the city
 See it proclaim'd, that none, on pain of death,
 Presume to give her comfort, food, or harbour;
 Who ministers the smallest comfort, dies.
 Her house, her costly furniture and wealth,
 The purchase of her loose luxurious life,
 We seize on, for the profit of the state.
 Away! be gone!

J. Sh. O thou most righteous judge——
 Humbly, behold, I bow myself to thee,
 And own thy justice in this hard decree:
 No longer then my ripe offences spare,
 But what I merit, let me learn to bear.
 Yet since 'tis all my wretchedness can give,
 For my past crimes my forfeit life receive;

No pity for my suff'rings here I crave,
And only hope forgiveness in the grave.

[Exit J. Shore, guarded by Catesby and others.

Gl. So much for this. Your project's at an end: [To Rat.
This idle toy, this hilding scorns my power,
And sets us all at nought. See that a guard
Be ready at my call ———

Rat. The council waits
Upon your highness' leisure. ———

Gloſt. Bid 'em enter.

Enter the Duke of Buckingham, Earl of Derby, Bp. of Ely,
L. Hastings and others, as to the council. The Duke
of Gloſter takes his place at the upper end, then the
rest sit.

Derb. In happy time are we assembled here,
To point the day, and fix the solemn pomp,
For placing England's crown with all due rites,
Upon our sov'reign Edward's youthful brow.

L. Haſt. Some busy meddling knaves, 'tis said there are,
As such will still be prating, who presume
To carp and cavil at his royal right;
Therefore I hold it fitting, with the soonest
T' appoint the order of the coronation;
So to approve our duty to the king,
And stay the babling of such vain gainsayers.

Derb. We all attend to know your highness' pleasure.
[To Gloſter.

Gloſt. My lords; a set of worthy men you are,
Prudent and just, and careful for the state:
Therefore to your most grave determination,
I yield myself in all things; and demand
What punishment your wisdom shall think meet
T' inflict upon those damnable contrivers,
Who shall with potions, charms, and witching drugs,
Practise against our person and our life.

L. Haſt. So much I hold the king your highness' debtor,
So precious are you to the common-weal,

That I presume, not only for myself,
But in behalf of these my noble brothers,
To say, whoe'er they be, they merit death.

Gl. Then judge yourselves, convince your eyes of truth,
Behold my arm thus blasted, dry and wither'd,

[Pulling up his sleeve.]

Shrunk like a foul abortion, and decay'd,
Like some untimely product of the seasons,
Robb'd of its properties of strength and office.
This is the sorcery of Edward's wife,
Who in conjunction with that harlot Shore,
And other like confed'rate midnight hags,
By force of potent spells, of bloody characters,
And conjurations horrible to hear,
Call fiends and spectres from the yawning deep,
And set the ministers of hell at work,
To torture and despoil me of my life.

L. Hast. If they have done this deed——

Gloft. If they have done it!

Talk'st thou to me of If's, audacious traitor!
Thou art that strumpet witch's chief abettor,
The patron and comploter of her mischiefs,
And join'd in this contrivance for my death.
Nay, start not, lords, — what ho! a guard there, sirs!

Enter Guard.

Lord Hastings, I arrest thee of high treason,
Seize him, and bear him instantly away.
He sha'not live an hour. By holy Paul!
I will not dine before his head be brought me:
Ratcliffe, stay you, and see that it be done.
The rest that love me, rise and follow me.

[Exeunt Gloster, and Lords following.]

Manent Lord Hastings, Ratcliffe, and guard.

L. Hast. What! and no more but this—how, to the
Oh gentle Ratcliffe! tell me, do I hold thee? (scaffold!
Or if I dream, what shall I do to wake,
To break, to struggle thro' this dread confusion?

For surely death itself is not so painful

As is this sudden horror and surprize. (absolute;

Rat. You heard, the duke's commands to me were
Therefore my lord, address you to your shrift,
With all good speed you may. Summon your courage,
And be yourself; for you must die this instant.

L. Haft. Yes, Ratcliffe, I will take thy friendly counsel,
And die as a man should; 'tis somewhat hard
To call my scatter'd spirits home at once:
But since what must be, must be — let necessity
Supply the place of time and preparation,
And arm me for the blow. 'Tis but to die,
'Tis but to venture on that common hazard
Which many a time in battle I have run;
'Tis but to do, what, at that very moment,
In many nations of the peopled earth,
A thousand and a thousand shall do with me:
'Tis but to close my eyes, and shut out day-light,
To view no more the wicked ways of men,
No longer to behold the Tyrant Gloster,
And be a weeping witness of the woes,
The desolation, slaughter and calamities,
Which he shall bring on this unhappy land.

Enter Alicia.

Alic. Stand off! and let me pass — I will, I must,
Catch him once more in these despairing arms,
And hold him to my heart — oh Hastings, Hastings!

L. Haft. Alas! why com'st thou at this dreadful moment
To fill me with new terrors, new distractions,
To turn me wild with thy distemper'd rage,
And shock the peace of my departing soul?
Away! I prithee leave me!

Alic. Stop a minute —
'Till my full griefs find passage. — Oh the tyrant!
Perdition fall on Gloster's head and mine.

L. Haft. What means thy frantic grief?

Alic. I cannot speak —
But I have murder'd thee — oh I could tell thee!

L. Hast. Speak and give ease to thy conflicting passions:
Be quick, nor keep me no longer in suspense,
Time presses, and a thousand crouding thoughts
Break in at once; this way and that they snatch,
They tear my hurry'd soul: all claim attention,
And yet not one is heard. Oh speak and leave me,
For I have business wou'd employ an age,
And but a minute's time to get it done in.

Alic. That, that's my grief — 'tis I that urge thee on,
Thus haunt thee to the toil, sweep thee from earth,
And drive thee down this precipice of fate.

L. Hast. Thy reason is grown wild. Could thy weak
Bring on this mighty ruin? If it could, (hand
What have I done so grievous to thy soul,
So deadly, so beyond the reach of pardon,
That nothing but my life can make atonement?

Alic. Thy cruel scorn had stung me to the heart,
And set my burning bosom all in flames:
Raving and mad I flew to my revenge,
And writ I know not what — told the protector,
That Shore's detested wife by wiles had won thee,
To plot against his greatness — he believ'd it,
(Oh dire event of my pernicious counsel)
And while I meant destruction on her head,
H' has turn'd it all on thine.

L. Hast. Accursed jealousy!
O merciless, wild and unforgiving fiend!
Blindfold it runs to undistinguish'd mischief,
And murders all it meets. Curst be its rage,
For there is none so deadly; doubly curs'd
Be all those easy fools who give it harbour:
Who turn a monster loose among mankind,
Fiercer than famine, war, or spotted pestilence;
Baneful as death, and horrible as hell.

Alic. If thou wilt curse, curse rather thine own falshood;
Curse the lewd maxims of thy perjur'd sex,
Which taught thee first to laugh at faith and justice,

To scorn the solemn sanctity of oaths,
 And make jest of a poor woman's ruin :
 Curse thy proud heart, and thy insulting tongue,
 That rais'd this fatal fury in my soul,
 And urg'd my vengeance to undo us both.

L. Haft. Oh thou inhuman ! turn thy eyes away,
 And blast me not with their destructive beams :
 Why shou'd I curse thee with my dying breath ?
 Be gone ! and let me sigh it out in peace.

Alic. Canst thou — Oh cruel Hastings, leave me thus !
 Hear me, I beg thee — I conjure thee, hear me !
 While with an agonizing heart, I swear,
 By all the pangs I feel, by all the sorrows,
 The terrors and despair thy loss shall give me,
 My hate was on my rival bent alone.
 Oh ! had I once divin'd, false as thou art,
 A danger to thy life, I would have dy'd,
 I would have met it for thee, and made bare
 My ready faithful breast to save thee from it.

L. Haft. Now mark ! and tremble at Heaven's just award,
 While thy insatiate wrath and fell revenge
 Pursu'd the innocence which never wrong'd thee,
 Behold ! the mischief falls on thee and me ?
 Remorse and heaviness of heart shall wait thee,
 And everlasting anguish be thy portion :
 For me, the snares of death are wound about me,
 And now, in one poor moment, I am gone.
 Oh ! if thou hast one tender thought remaining,
 Fly to thy closet, fall upon thy knee,
 And recommend my parting soul to mercy.

Alic. Oh ! yet, before I go for ever from thee,
 Turn thee in gentleness and pity to me, [Kneeling.
 And in compassion of my strong affliction,
 Say, is it possible you can forgive
 The fatal rashness of ungovern'd love ?
 For oh ! 'tis certain, If I had not lov'd thee,
 Beyond my peace, my reason, fame and life,

Desir'd to death, and doated to distraction,
This day of horror never should have known us.

L. Haft. Oh! rise, and let me hush thy stormy sorrows,
[*Raising her.*

Assuage thy tears, for I will chide no more,
No more upbraid thee, thou unhappy fair-one.
I see the hand of Heav'n is arm'd against me,
And, in mysterious providence, decrees
To punish me by thy mistaking hand.
Most righteous doom! for, oh! while I behold thee,
Thy wrongs rise up in terrible array,
And charge thy ruin on me; thy fair fame,
Thy spotless beauty, innocence, and youth,
Dishonour'd, blasted and betray'd by me.

Alic. And does thy heart relent for my undoing?
Oh! that inhuman Gloster could be mov'd,
But half so easily as I can pardon!

L. Haft. Here then exchange we mutually forgiveness,
So may the guilt of all my broken vows,
My perjuries to thee be all forgotten,
As here my soul acquits thee of my death,
As here I part without one angry thought,
As here I leave thee with the softest tenderness,
Mourning the chance of our disastrous loves,
And begging Heav'n to bless and to support thee.

Rat. My lord, dispatch; the duke has sent to chide me
For loitering in my duty ———

L. Haft. I obey.

Alic. Infatiate, savage monster! is a moment
So tedious to thy malice? oh! repay him,
Thou great Avenger, give him blood for blood:
Guilt haunt him! fiends pursue him! lightnings blast him!
Some horrid, cursed kind of death o'ertake him,
Sudden, and in the fulness of his sins!
That he may know how terrible it is,
To want that moment he denies thee now.

L. Haft. 'Tis all in vain, this rage that tears thy bosom,

Like a poor bird that flutters in its cage,
 Thou beat'st thyself to death. Retire I beg thee;
 To see thee thus, thou know'st not how it wounds me,
 Thy agonies are added to my own,
 And make the burden more than I can bear.
 Farewel — Good angels visit thy afflictions,
 And bring thee peace and comfort from above.

Alic. Oh! stab me to the heart, some pitying hand,
 Now strike me dead —

L. Haft. One thing I had forgot. —
 I charge thee by our present common miseries,
 By our past loves, if yet they have a name,
 By all thy hopes of peace here and hereafter,
 Let not the rancour of thy hate pursue
 The innocence of thy unhappy friend:
 Thou know'st who 'tis I mean; oh! shouldst thou wrong
 her,

Just Heav'n shall double all thy woes upon thee,
 And make 'em know no end — Remember this
 As the last warning of a dying man:

Farewel for ever! [*The Guards carry Hastings off.*]

Alic. For ever? oh! for ever!

Oh! who can bear to be a wretch for ever!
 My rival too! his last thoughts hung on her:
 And, as he parted, left a blessing for her.
 Shall she be blest, and I be curst, for ever!
 No; since her fatal beauty was the cause
 Of all my sufferings, let her share my pains:
 Let her, like me, of ev'ry joy forlorn,
 Devote the hour when such a wretch was born:
 Like me to desarts and to darkness run,
 Abhor the day, and curse the golden sun;
 Cast ev'ry good, and ev'ry hope behind;
 Detest the works of nature, loath mankind:
 Like me, with cries distracted fill the air;
 Tear her poor bosom, rend her frantic hair;
 And prove the torments of the last despair.

[*Exit.*]

A C T V. S C E N E I.

S C E N E, *the Street.**Enter Bellmour, Dumont, and Shore.**Sh.* **Y**OU saw her then?

Bell. I met her as returning
In solemn penance from the public cross :
Before her, certain rascal officers,
Slaves in authority, the knaves of justice,
Proclaim'd the tyrant Gloster's cruel orders.
On either side her march'd an ill-look'd priest,
Who with severe, with horrid haggard eyes,
Did ever and anon by turns upbraid her,
And thunder in her trembling ear damnation.
Around her, numberless the rabble flow'd,
Shouldring each other, crouding for a view,
Gaping and gazing, taunting and reviling ;
Some pitying, but those, alas ! how few !
The most, such iron hearts we are, and such
The base barbarity of human kind,
With insolence and leud reproach pursu'd her,
Hooting and railing. and with villainous hands
Gathering the filth from out the common ways,
To hurl upon her head.

Sh. Inhuman dogs !
How did she bear it !

Bell. With the gentlest patience,
Submissive, sad, and lowly was her look ;
A burning taper in her hand she bore,
And on her shoulders carelessly confus'd
With loose neglect her lovely tresses hung ;
Upon her cheek a faintish flush was spread,
Feeble she seem'd, and sorely smit with pain,
While bare-foot as she trod the flinty pavement,

Her footsteps all along were mark'd with blood.
 Yet silent still she pass'd and unrepining;
 Her streaming eyes bent ever on the earth,
 Except when in some bitter pang of sorrow,
 To Heav'n she seem'd in fervent zeal to raise,
 And beg that mercy man deny'd her here.

Sh. When was this piteous sight?

Bell. These last two days.

You know my care was wholly bent on you,
 To find the happy means of your deliverance,
 Which but for Hastings' death I had not gain'd.
 During that time, altho' I have not seen her,
 Yet divers trusty messengers I've sent,
 To wait about, and watch a fit convenience
 To give her some relief; but all in vain:
 A churlish guard attends upon her steps,
 Who menace those with death that bring her comfort,
 And drive all succour from her.

Sh. Let 'em threaten;

Let proud oppression prove its fiercest malice;
 So Heav'n befriend my soul, as here I vow
 To give her help, and share one fortune with her.

Bell. Mean you to see her, thus, in your own form?

Sh. I do.

Bell. And have you thought upon the consequence?

Sh. What is there I should fear?

Bell. Have you examin'd

Into your inmost heart, and try'd at leisure
 The several secret springs that move the passions?
 Has mercy fix'd her empire there so sure,
 That wrath and vengeance never may return?
 Can you resume a husband's name, and bid
 That wakeful dragon, fierce resentment, sleep?

Sh. Why dost thou search so deep, and urge my memory?
 To conjure up my wrongs to life again?
 I have long labour'd to forget myself,
 To think on all time, backward, like a space,

Idle and void, where nothing e'er had being;
 But thou hast peopled it again; revenge
 And jealousy renew their horrid forms,
 Shoot all their fires, and drive me to distraction.

Bell. Far be the thought from me I my care was only
 To arm you for the meeting: better were it
 Never to see her, than to let that name
 Recal forgotten rage, and make the husband
 Destroy the gen'rous pity of Dumont.

Sh. Oh! thou hast set my busy brain at work,
 And now she musters up a train of images,
 Which to preserve my peace I had cast aside,
 And sunk in deep oblivion—oh that form!
 That Angel-face on which my dottage hung!
 How have I gaz'd upon her! till my soul
 With very eagerness went forth towards her,
 And issu'd at my eyes—was there a gem
 Which the sun ripens in the Indian mine,
 Or the rich bosom of the ocean yields,
 What was there art could make, or wealth could buy,
 Which I have left unsought, to deck her beauty?
 What cou'd her king do more?—and yet she fled.

Bell. Away with that sad fancy. ———

Sh. Oh! that day!
 The thought of it must live for ever with me.
 I met her, Bellmour, when the royal spoiler
 Bore her in triumph from my widow'd home!
 Within his chariot by his side she sat,
 And listen'd to his talk with downward looks;
 'Till sudden as she chanc'd aside to glance,
 Her eyes encounter'd mine—oh! then, my friend!
 Oh! who can paint my grief and her amazement!
 As at the stroke of death, twice turn'd she pale,
 And twice a burning crimson blush'd all o'er her;
 Then, with a shriek heart-wounding loud she cry'd,
 While down her cheeks the gushing torrents ran
 Fast falling on her hands, which thus she wrung —

Mov'd at her grief, the tyrant ravisher,
 With courteous action woo'd her oft to turn;
 Earnest he seem'd to plead; but all in vain;
 Ev'n to the last she bent her sight towards me,
 And follow'd me ——— till I had lost myself.

Bell. Alas! for pity! oh! those speaking tears!
 Could they be false? did she not suffer with you?
 And tho' the king by force possess'd her person,
 Her unconsenting heart dwelt still with you:
 If all her former woes were not enough,
 Look on her now, behold her where she wanders,
 Hunted to death, distress'd on every side,
 With no one hand to help; and tell me then,
 If ever misery were known like hers?

Sh. And can she bear it? can that delicate frame
 Endure the beating of a storm so rude?
 Can she, for whom the various seasons chang'd,
 To court her appetite, and crown her board,
 For whom the foreign vintages were press'd,
 For whom the merchant spread his silken stores,
 Can she ———

Intreat for bread, and want the needful raiment,
 To wrap her shivering bosom from the weather?
 When she was mine, no care came ever nigh her.
 I thought the gentlest breeze that wakes the spring
 Too rough to breathe upon her; cheerfulness
 Danc'd all the day before her; and at night
 Soft slumbers waited on her downy pillow ———
 Now sad and shelterless, perhaps, she lies,
 Where piercing winds blow sharp, and the chill rain
 Drops from some pent-house on her wretched head,
 Drenches her locks, and kills her with the cold.
 It is too much——hence with her past offences,
 They are aton'd at full——why stay we then?
 Oh! let us haste, my friend, and find her out.

Bell. Somewhere about this quarter of the town,
 I hear the poor abandon'd creature lingers:

Her guard, tho' set with strictest watch to keep
 All food and friendship from her, yet permit her
 To wander in the streets, there chuse her bed,
 And rest her head on what cold stone she pleases.

Sh. Here let us then divide ; each in his round
 To search her sorrows out, whose hap it is
 First to behold her, this way let him lead
 Her fainting steps, and meet me here together. [*Exeunt.*
Enter Jane Shore, her hair hanging loose on her shoulders,
and bare-footed.

J. S. Yet, yet endure, nor murmur, oh ! my soul ;
 For are not thy transgressions great and numberless ?
 Do they not cover thee like rising floods,
 And press thee like a weight of waters down ?
 Does not the hand of righteousness afflict thee ?
 And who shall plead against it ? who shall say
 To pow'r almighty, thou hast done enough ?
 Or bid his dreadful road of vengeance, stay ?
 Wait then with patience, till the circling hours
 Shall bring the time of thy appointed rest,
 And lay thee down in death. The hireling thus
 With labour drudges out the painful day,
 And often looks with long-expecting eyes
 To see the shadows rise, and be dismiss'd.
 And hark ! methinks the roar that late pursu'd me,
 Sinks, like the murmurs of a falling wind,
 And softens into silence. Does revenge
 And malice then grow weary and forsake me ?
 My guard too, that observ'd me still so close,
 Tire in the task of their inhuman office,
 And loiter far behind. Alas ! I faint,
 My spirits fail all at once — this is the door
 Of my Alicia — blessed opportunity !
 I'll steal a little succour from her goodness,
 Now, while no eye observes me. [*She knocks at the door.*

Enter servant.

Is your lady,

E

My gentle friend, at home? oh! bring me to her. [*Going in.*

Ser. Hold mistress, whither wou'd you?

[*Putting her back.*

J. Sh. Do you not know me?

Ser. I know you well, and know my orders too.

You must not enter here ———

J. Sh. Tell my Alicia,

'Tis I would see her.

Ser. She is ill at ease,

And will admit no visiter.

J. Sh. But tell her

'Tis I, her friend, the partner of her heart,

Wait at the door and beg ———

Ser. 'Tis all in vain ———

Go hence, and howl to those that will regard you.

[*Shuts the door, and Exit.*

J. Sh. It was not always thus; the time has been,
When this unfriendly door, that bars my passage,
Flew wide, and almost leap'd from off its hinges
To give me entrance here; when this good house,
Has pour'd forth all its dwellings to receive me;
When my approach has made a little holy-day,
And ev'ry face was dress'd in smiles to meet me:
But now 'tis otherwise, and those who bless'd me,
Now curse me to my face. Why should I wander,
Stray further on, for I can die ev'n here!

[*She sits down at the door.*

Enter Alicia in disorder; two servants following.

Alic. What wretch art thou? whose misery and baseness
Hangs on my door; whose hateful whine of woe
Breaks in upon my sorrows, and distracts
My jarring senses with thy beggar's cry?

J. Sh. A very beggar, and a wretch indeed;
One driv'n by strong calamity, to seek
For succour here; one perishing for want;
Whose hunger has not tasted food these three days;
And humbly ask for charity's dear sake,

A draught of water and a little bread.

Alic. And dost thou come to me, to me for bread?
I know thee not — Go — hunt for it abroad,
Where wanton hands upon the earth have scatter'd it,
Or cast it on the waters — Mark the eagle,
And hungry vulture, where they wind the prey:
Watch where the ravens of the valley feed,
And seek thy food with them ——— I know thee not.

J. Sh. And yet there was a time when my Alicia
Has thought unhappy Shore her dearest blessing;
And mourn'd that live-long day she pass'd without me.
When pair'd like turtles, we were still together;
When often as we prattled arm in arm,
Inclining fondly to me she has sworn,
She lov'd me more than all the world beside.

Alic. Ha! say'st thou! let me look upon thee well ---
'Tis true — I know thee now — a mischief on thee!
Thou art that fatal fair, that curst she,
That set my brain a madding. Thou hast rob'd me;
Thou hast undone me! — Murder! Oh my Hastings!
See his pale bloody head shoots glaring by me!
Give him me back again, thou soft deluder,
Thou beauteous witch ———

J. Sh. Alas! I never wrong'd you ———
Oh! then be good to me; have pity on me:
Thou never knew'st the bitterness of want,
And may'st thou never know it. Oh! bestow
Some poor remain, the voiding of thy table,
A morsel to support my famish'd soul.

Alic. Avaunt, and come not near me ———

J. Sh. To thy hand
I trusted all, gave my whole store to thee;
Nor do I ask it back, allow me but
The smallest pittance, give me but to eat,
Lest I fall down and perish here before thee.

Alic. Nay! tell not me! where is the king, thy Edward,
And all the smiling crying train of courtiers,

That bent the knee before thee ?

J. Sh. Oh ! for mercy !

Alic. Mercy ! I know it not —— for I am miserable.
I'll give thee misery, for here she dwells ;
'This is her house, where the sun never dawns,
'The bird of night sits screaming o'er the roof,
'Grim spectres sweep along the horrid gloom,
'And nought is heard but wailings and lamentings.
'Hark ! something cracks above ! it shakes, it totters !
'And see the nodding ruin falls to crush me !
'Tis fall'n, 'tis here ! I feel it on my brain !

1 Serv. This sight disorders her ——

2 Serv. Retire, dear lady ——

And leave this woman ——

Alic. Let her take my counsel !

Why should'st thou be a wretch ? stab, tear thy heart,
And rid thyself of this detested being,
I wo't not linger long behind thee here.
A waving flood of blewish fire swells o'er me ;
And now 'tis out, and I am drown'd in blood.
Ha ! what art thou ! thou horrid headless trunk ;
It is my Hastings ! see ! he wafts me on !
Away ! I go ! I fly ! I follow thee.
But come not thou with mischief-making beauty
To interpose between us, look not on him,
Give thy fond arts, and thy delusions o'er ;
For thou shalt never, never part us more.

[*She runs off, her servants following.*]

J. Sh. Alas ! she raves ; her brain, I fear, is turn'd,
In mercy look upon her, gracious Heav'n,
Nor visit her for any wrong to me,
Sure I am near upon my journey's end ;
My head runs round, my eyes begin to fail,
And dancing shadows swim before my sight :
I can no more, [*lies down*] receive me thou cold earth,
Thou common parent, take me to thy bosom,
And let me rest with thee.

Enter Bellmour.

Bell. Upon the ground !

Thy miseries can never lay thee lower.
Look up, thou poor afflicted one ! thou mourner
Whom none has comforted ! where are thy friends,
The dear companions of thy joyful days,
Whose hearts thy warm prosperity made glad,
Whose arms were taught to grow like ivy round thee,
And bind thee to their bosoms ?—— Thus with thee,
Thus let us live, and let us die they said,
For sure thou art the sister of our loves,
And nothing shall divide us —— now where are they ?

J. Sh. Ah ! Bellmour, were indeed ! they stand aloof,
And view my desolation from afar ;
When they pass by, they shake their heads in scorn,
And cry, behold the harlot, and her end !
And yet thy goodness turns aside to pity me,
Alas ! there may be danger, get thee gone !
Let me not pull a ruin on thy head,
Leave me to die alone, for I am fall'n
Never to rise, and all relief is vain.

Bell. Yet raise thy drooping head ; for I am come
To chase away despair. Behold ! where yonder
That honest man, that faithful brave Dumont,
Is hastening to thy aid ——

J. Sh. Dumont ! ha ! where !

[Raising herself, and looking about.]

Then Heav'n has heard my prayer, his very name
Renews the springs of life, and cheers my soul.
Has he then scap'd the snare ?

Bell. He has, but see ——

He comes unlike to that Dumont you knew,
For now he wears your better angel's form,
And comes to visit you with peace and pardon.

Enter Shore.

J. Sh. Speak, tell me ! which is he ? and oh ! what would
This dreadful vision ! see it comes upon me ——

It is my husband — ah!

[*She swoons.*]

Sh. She faints, support her!

Sustain her head, while I infuse this cordial
Into her dying lips — from spicy drugs,
Rich herbs and flow'rs, the potent juice is drawn;
With wondrous force it strikes the lazy spirits,
Drives 'em around, and wakens life anew.

Bell. Her weakness could not bear the strong surprize.
But see, she stirs! and the returning blood
Faintly begins to blush again, and kindle
Upon her ashy cheek —

Sh. So — gently raise her — [Raising her up.]

J. Sh. Ha! what art thou! Bellmour!

Bell. How fare you, lady?

J. Sh. My heart is thrill'd with horror —

Bell. Be of courage —

Your husband lives! 'tis he, my worthiest friend—

J. Sh. Still art thou there --- still dost thou hover round
Oh save me, Bellmour, from his angry shade? [me!]

Bell. 'Tis he himself! — he lives! — look up —

J. Sh. I dare not!

Oh that my eyes could shut him out for ever —

Sh. Am I so hateful then, so deadly to thee,
To blast thy eyes with horror? since I'm grown
A burthen to the world, myself and thee,
Would I had ne'er surviv'd to see thee more.

J. Sh. Oh thou most injur'd — dost thou live indeed,
Fall then ye mountains on my guilty head,
Hide me, ye rocks, within your secret caverns;
Cast thy black veil upon my shame, O night!
And shield me with thy sable wing for ever.

Sh. Why dost thou turn away? --- why tremble thus?
Why thus indulge thy fears? and in despair,
Abandon thy distracted soul to horror?
Cast every black and guilty thought behind thee,
And let 'em never vex thy quiet more.
My arms, my heart are open to receive thee,

To bring thee back to thy forsaken home,
With tender joy, with fond forgiving love,
And all the longings of my first desires.

J. Sh. No, arm thy brow with vengeance; and appear
The minister of heav'n's enquiring justice.
Array thyself all terrible for judgment,
Wrath in thy eyes, and thunder in thy voice;
Pronounce my sentence, and if yet there be
A woe I have not felt, inflict it on me.

Sh. The measure of thy sorrows is compleat;
And I am come to snatch thee, from injustice.
The hand of pow'r no more shall crush thy weakness,
Nor proud oppression grind thy humble soul.

J. Sh. Art thou not risen by miracle from death?
Thy shroud is fall'n from off thee, and the grave
Was bid to give thee up, that thou might'st come
The messenger of grace and goodness to me,
To seal my peace, and bless me ere I go.
Oh let me then fall down beneath thy feet,
And weep my gratitude for ever there:
Give me your drops, ye soft descending rains.
Give me your streams, ye never-ceasing springs,
That my sad eyes may still supply my duty,
And feed an everlasting flood of sorrow.

Sh. Waste not thy feeble spirits — I have long
Beheld, unknown, thy mourning and repentance;
Therefore my heart has set aside the past,
And holds thee white, as unoffending innocence:
Therefore in spite of cruel Gloster's rage,
Soon as my friend had broke my prison-doors,
I flew to thy assistance. Let us haste,
Now while occasion seems to smile upon us,
Forake this place of shame and find a shelter.

J. Sh. What shall I say to you? but I obey —

Sh. Lean on my arm —

J. Sh. Alas! I am wondrous faint:
But that's not strange, I have not eat these three days.

Sh. Oh merciless ! look here, my love, I've brought
Some rich conserves ——— [thee

J. Sh. How can you be so good ?
But you were ever thus ; I well remember,
With what fond care, what diligence of love,
You lavish'd out your wealth, to buy me pleasures,
Preventing every wish : have you forgot
The costly string of pearl you brought me home,
And ty'd about my neck ? — how could I leave you ?

Sh. Taste some of this, or this ———

J. Sh. You're strangely alter'd —
Stay, gentle Bellmour, is he not ? how pale
Your visage is become ? your eyes are hollow ;
Nay, you are wrinkled too ——— Alas the day !
My wretchedness has cost you many a tear,
And many a bitter pang, since last we parted.

Sh. No more of that — thou talk'st, but dost not eat.

J. Sh. My feeble jaws forget their common office,
My tasteless tongue cleaves to the clammy roof,
And now a gen'ral loathing grows upon me —
Oh, I am sick at heart !

Sh. Thou murd'rous sorrow !
Wo't thou still drink her blood, pursue her still ?
Must she then die ! Oh, my poor penitent,
Speak peace to thy sad heart. She hears me not ;
Grief masters ev'ry sense --- help me to hold her ---

Enter Catesby, with a guard.

Cat. Seize on 'em both, as traitors to the state ———

Bell. What means this violence !

[*Guards lay hold on Shore and Bellmour.*

Cat. Have we not found you,
In scorn of the protector's strict command,
Assisting this base woman, and abetting
Her infamy ?

Sh. Infamy on thy head !
Thou tool of power, thou pander to authority !
I tell thee, knave, thou know'st of none so virtuous.

And she that bore thee was an Aethiop to her.

Cat. You'll answer this at full — away with 'em.

Sh. Is charity grown treason to your court?
What honest man would live beneath such rulers?
I am content that we should die together —

Cat. Convey the men to prison; but for her,
Leave her to hunt her fortune as she may.

J. Sh. I will not part with him — for me! — for me!
Oh! must he die for me?

[Following him as he is carry'd off — she falls.]

Sh. Inhumane villains! *[Breaks from the guard.]*
Stand off! the agonies of death are on her —
She pulls, she grips me hard with her cold hand.

J. Sh. Was this blow wanting to compleat my ruin!
Oh let him go, ye ministers of terror;
He shall offend no more, for I will die,
And yield obedience to your cruel master.
Tarry a little, but a little longer,
And take my last breath with you.

Sh. Oh my love!
Why have I liv'd to see this bitter moment,
This grief by far surpassing all my former!
Why dost thou fix thy dying eyes upon me
With such an earnest, such a piteous look,
As if thy heart were full of some sad meaning
Thou could'st not speak! —

J. Sh. Forgive me — but forgive me!

Sh. Be witness for me, ye celestial host,
Such mercy and such pardon as my soul
Accords to thee, and begs of Heav'n to shew thee;
May such befall me at my latest hour,
And make my portion blest or curs'd for ever.

J. Sh. Then all is well, and I shall sleep in peace —
'Tis very dark, and I have lost you now —
Was there not something I would have bequeath'd you?
But I have nothing left me to bestow,
Nothing but one sad sigh. Oh mercy, Heav'n! *[Dies.]*

Bell. There fled the soul,
And left the load of misery behind.

Sb. Oh my heart's treasure ! is this pale sad visage
All that remains of thee ? are these dead eyes
The light that cheer my soul ? oh heavy hour !
But I will fix my trembling lips to thine,
'Till I am cold and senseless quite, as thou art.
What, must we part then ? — will you —

[To the guards taking him away.]

Fare thee well —

[Kissing her.]

Now execute your tyrant's will, and lead me
To bonds, or death, 'tis equally indifferent.

Bell. Let those, who view this sad example, know,
What fate attends the broken marriage-vow ;
And teach their children in succeeding times,
No common vengeance waits upon these crimes ;
When such severe repentance could not save
From want, from shame, and an untimely grave.

[Exeunt.]

E P I L O G U E.

Spoken by Mrs. OLDFIELD.

YE modest matrons all, ye virtuous wives,
Who lead with horrid husbands, decent lives;
You, who for all you are in such a taking,
To see your spouses drinking, gaming, raking,
Yet make a conscience still of cuckold-making;
What can we say your pardon to obtain?
This matter here was prov'd against poor Jane:
She never once deny'd it, but in short,
Whimper'd — and cry'd — Sweet Sir, I'm sorry for't.
'Twas well he met a kind, good-natur'd soul,
We are not all so easy to controul:
I fancy one might find in this good town
Some wou'd ha' told the gentleman his own;
Have answer'd smart; — 'To what do you pretend,
'Blockhead! — As if I must n't see a friend:
'Tell me of hackney-coaches — jaunts to the city —
'Where shou'd I buy my China — Faith, I'll fit ye —
Our wife was of a milder, meeker spirit;
You! — Lords and Masters! — was not that same merit?
Don't you allow it to be virtuous bearing,
When we submit thus to your domineering?
Well, peace be with her, she did wrong most surely;
But so do many more who look demurely.
Nor shou'd our mourning Madam weep alone,
There are more ways of wickedness than one.
If the reforming stage should fall to shaming,
Ill-nature, pride, hypocrisy, and gaming;

EPILOGUE.

*The Poets frequently might move compassion,
And with She-Tragedies o'er-run the nation,
Then judge the fair offender, with good-nature,
And let your fellow-feeling curb your satire.
What if our neighbours have some little failing,
Must we need fall to damning and to railing?
For her excuse too, be it understood,
That if the woman was not quite so good,
Her lover was a king, she flesh and blood.
And since sh' has dearly paid the sinful score,
Be kind at last, and pity poor Jane Shore.*

}

F I N I S.



